



Stakeholder Interview Notes

March 9, 2018

Municipal Conference Room
9 S. Main Street
Waynesville, NC 28786

Group 1 – Real Estate

Why are people moving to Waynesville? What attracts them to it?

- Surveys show they are moving to take advantage of recreation, fitness opportunities, access to natural features, greenways, hiking trails, lakes, etc.
- What has been the activity level with residential and commercial real estate over the past few years; Is there interest in Low to Moderate Income housing?
 - Want retirees to move here; quality of life is fantastic; homes are nice and they are able to do a lot; parks and rec., etc.
 - sidewalk requirements here sometimes act as a potential barrier to development
 - Plott Creek multifamily development has been discussed (market rate)
 - The climate is right but the holdup is utility availability. Need it to be in more places
 - Challenge is can we politically get everyone on board to fund infrastructure improvements – cost prohibitive because it is a mountain town?
- Elizabeth has been a really great addition to the Town
 - Jackson County Commissioners has gotten into sidewalk building?

What do you feel should be the primary purpose of the Comprehensive Plan?

- Infrastructure – Howell Mill Rd. Low to moderate income project with 3rd largest builder
- Senior affordable housing
- Greenway is very important to people that are moving here

Is zoning a problem?

- Not really because the town has had mixed use zoning in most districts for years

What is the climate like for industrial development? Is there interest?

- Want it to be easier for industry to move into the town
- Restructured the Economic Development Commission in order to be included in Asheville's recruitment efforts
- Include reuse and new sites
- Beaver Dam industrial park has shovel ready spots; Lee plant behind new Ingles

Where are people buying goods? In town or out of town?



Town of Waynesville Comprehensive Land Use Plan

- Corridor retail
- Only boutique retail in downtown
- Frog Level and Hazelwood provide a different retail experience.

What is vital?

- Regional health care must be within a reasonable distance for people to feel comfortable moving to a place – that is more important than retail proximity – all this keeps real estate prices high.

What is ideal commercial development in Waynesville?

- Target and Kohls are what people think is a measure of success but people also don't want to grow to be able to attract those types of merchants
- Demographics (e.g. older population compared to the state average) is a factor
- Target did show interest at some point
- Publix is coming

Demographics

- How do you measure the poverty (19 percent)? Average it? What about the income of the seasonal population to attract the larger national retailers?
- Growth at the edges versus redevelopment (e.g. Waynesville Plaza) in the core? This plan will attempt to figure out what is most important and makes the most sense for the town – extend the aesthetic of Main Street onto side streets and other corridors

What areas could use some extra TLC in Waynesville?

- South Main Street
- Frog Level and Hazelwood (infill)
- The NCDOT improvements will create gateways
- The market will fix the Russ and Main Street/Brown Avenue corridors
- Waynesville Plaza is already zoned and ready for mixed use development
- Every commercial district is mixed use except for commercial/industrial (facilitates redevelopment)
 - There is pushback from some improvements on roadways like Russ Avenue because there is limited ROW
- Other side of Russ Avenue?
 - Potential commercial development
 - 17 acres north of the expressway
- The Town needs broadband internet – everyone is working in silos, but broadband isn't getting done
 - Statutorily limited as to what the municipality can do
 - AT&T is laying wire all over town possibly to compete with the only cable provider



Town of Waynesville Comprehensive Land Use Plan

What are other needs in Waynesville?

- Education is important, health care is important and quality of life issues – at one time the hospital almost closed
- Historically, people do not want to see Waynesville grow
- Main Street is not designed to service the town residents; designed to service tourists that are spending more money
- A bus from Lake Junaluska to Frog Level and other points of interest would be great – need transit
- Relationship with Economic Development and Asheville is going to be very big for Waynesville
 - They're sending all listings to the Buncombe County EDC website to attract more interest; the group has been incentivized to recruit business in Waynesville because it meets needs without paying high rents in Asheville
- The Town could float a bond referendum for greenways and workforce housing, etc.

Group 2 – Social Services

What are Waynesville's issues and needs and how can the plan update help your organization?

- Homeless shelter/emergency housing; Waynesville has only place west of Asheville; Also have a women and children shelter that holds around 10 families
- AMI - 60 to 80 percent of median income represents \$10-16 dollars/ hour; do not qualify for any other federal assistance
- Habitat for Humanity is one of two groups building low-income housing (two year waiting list for those below 80 percent
- Challenge to meet the need for affordable housing
- Price of land is an obstacle to building affordable housing. Existing affordable land is mostly in the floodplain but cannot build there – becomes cost prohibitive with flood insurance
- Very few rentals that can use Section 8 vouchers
- Average rent for 2-bedroom is \$800-1000 and average monthly income is much lower than that
- These factors increase the homeless population in Waynesville – 300 plus school aged children are homeless and live out of vehicles
- Housing prices are increasing in the eastern part of the county because of the Buncombe push
- Unemployment rate is great, but people must be extremely underemployed and not making enough money to live based on the level of poverty
- A lot of homeless population is due to the opioid /meth addiction and those persons can't get employment– getting someone a job with an active addiction is challenging
- **Research McKenny Vento Law (definition of homeless of students)**

What is the housing situation for the underserved and low-income population?

- Conversion of municipal-owned buildings into affordable housing has been looked into but is cost prohibitive



Town of Waynesville Comprehensive Land Use Plan

- Study available for town-owned buildings and housing (see Elizabeth)
- A grant has been pursued to save Haywood County Hospital – if not successful this time it will likely be demolished
- No transitional housing; no bike lanes; no safe ways to get to school; don't have sidewalks
- Need Haywood public transit for LMI population
- Self Help Housing and Section 8 are available through Mountain Initiatives – Self Help is where the people help with the building, so they have some equity in the process
- Town and County are participating in the efforts in Mountain Initiatives
- Waynesville has a housing authority which takes some of these clients when there is room
- Identify properties that could be purchased or repurposed for LMI housing

What other things should the team be aware of?

- Origin destination study needs to be done to show where retail workers are living/can afford to live (ie what \$10-\$15/hour job can afford)
- What are the most recent projects for elderly? Inpatient facility at hospital
- Is Cindy Weeks, an affordable housing developer involved in projects? The team would like to talk with her
- Identify properties that can provide affordable housing whether its redevelopment or the utilization of existing properties.
- Lots of mobile homes, no apartments.
- Senior citizens – provide people the ability to stay in their homes; in-home caregivers to allow that to happen. Senior retirement communities in Waynesville?
- Western Economic Development Corporation will provide tuition assistance and gas money to go to school in order to fill jobs.
- Childcare and preschool costs and regulations are an issue, are an issue; soon there may no longer be subsidized preschools.

Group 3 – Economic Development

Mayor made the following opening statement – “I have a fear of leaving Waynesville as a divided/gentrified community”... “if that happens you could leave my grave unmarked...”[want] an inclusive for all people no matter what race or orientation.”

What types of initiatives are going on to foster Economic Development?

- Three years ago, the town EDC was put under the Chamber of Commerce and recently the Waynesville chamber proposed a partnership with Buncombe County Chamber (see notes from Real Estate) for wider exposure
- Chamber also has ambassador groups (young professionals, etc.)

Is the Town/County able to meet the needs of employees?

- Evergreen is a paper mill in Canton looking for employees
- Employers need people with advanced training
- Entry level hourly workforce is the hardest to find; will just settle for someone to just show up



Town of Waynesville Comprehensive Land Use Plan

- Giles Chemical has not been fully staffed in 18 months (need 250 employees to be fully staffed) typically have 4 – 15 openings
- Adjustment in wages a few times to attract
- Closely work with the community college as far as training
- Hospital has a need of 50 nurses per day
 - Will hire every nurse that comes out of the community college
- There is growth but it isn't coming out of the necessary groups like people are being born – it's from a higher average age
- County-level
 - Hospitality industry brings workers in from other places (countries)
 - Ski area brings in persons from South America
- Last year people were so desperate for help that they dropped the drug screening for some jobs
 - Giles Chemical works closely with the Pathway Center (work with those with addiction issues); Success stories have come out of that program.

Folkmoot

- International folk festival (40 shows during July)
- In June 2014, the Town gave them a 40,000 sq. ft. school with a commercial kitchen and other areas that food trucks and others can utilize (co-op)
- They house 250 international performers
- Hire bus drivers, cafeterias, and hire from the jail

Why are people moving to Waynesville?

- Lots of transplants from Cullowhee – WCU professors and staff are moving out here (25 min drive)
- Historic Preservation is important in Waynesville
 - Bed and breakfasts are a big part of the community
 - Folkmoot is in a historic building
 - We see the historic properties as a commodity and they need to be preserved
 - Need to check the National Register listings

How bad is it for those with the least in Waynesville?

- It is a Tier 3 county and USDA rating – one of the richest counties in the state per that assessment. Need answers to:
 - How is that possible with the economic data that was shown (poverty, etc)?
 - Are people to work for lower wages to live in Waynesville? Like school teachers, other educated individuals? Is that why the Household Income is lower than the state and the national average?
- Regional economic development looks worse than the town as a whole
- Are businesses priced out of Waynesville?
- Clean industry is wanted
- Opportunity to catch overflow from Asheville